

# IMAGEN OF Boulder County

Issue #2 February 2007

### The Abilene Paradox

Researched by Tony Tafoya

When a group makes a decision and takes action in contradiction to what individuals really want to do, it is commonly said that they have all gone to Abilene. Each member of the group really disagrees with the decision to go to Abilene, but says nothing. Later, when recriminations start, the group learns that no one was comfortable with the decision, and went along to keep the peace or for fear that they would be seen as a trouble maker. In truth, groups need dissenters who challenge the majority. For real change to occur, that is positive for the group, the dissenters must speak up before the group goes to Abilene.

So what is the Abilene Paradox, and why is it useful to be aware of it? What follows is what I remember of how Professor Jerry Harvey of George Washington University described his 1974 experience with his family in Coleman, Texas.

The family is in Coleman, Texas in July where the temperature is over 100 degrees, and there is a fine dust blowing around and getting into everything. (Those of you who have lived in New Mexico have also

experienced that fine dust on everything. It gets into your nose and ears and under your fingernails.) The family is playing dominoes and drinking cold lemonade. No one moves very fast nor gets too far away from the fan. It is a typical hot day in Coleman and the four people are making the best of it on the porch, because they have no air conditioning in the house. At some point the father-in-law suggests that they all drive to Abilene and eat at a restaurant. Abilene is 53 miles away, and the old Buick does not have air conditioning. The son-in-law thinks to himself that it is a stupid idea, but doesn't say anything. Neither does his wife nor his mother-in-law. So they all load up into the dusty Buick, roll down the windows and head off to Abilene for a meal in 100 degree heat. Once in Abilene, they find that they do not enjoy the meal as much as they thought they would. Probably because they still have to drive another hour in the heat and dust back to Coleman. When they get home, no one comments on the ride to Abilene or the restaurant. After some time, the wife's father says, "That was a nice trip." His wife disagrees and says that it was a bad idea and that it was not

In Unity there is strength, communication and progress

a nice trip. The son-in-law, supported by his mother-in-law's argument, finally joins in and says that it was a bad idea. He just went along to be sociable. Finally, his wife also joins in, and says she only went to be sociable and keep everybody happy. The father-in-law who made the initial suggestion admits that he wasn't too keen on the trip and had only been making conversation. In the end, they all come to the conclusion that they should have said something to oppose the suggestion.

In our daily lives we have to interact with other individuals and groups of people. In doing so, we often participate in activities that we don't like, because we don't speak up. In fact, we often end up doing the opposite of what we would rather do. It doesn't make sense to us why everybody else is going along, yet we say nothing. This is the paradox. We do the opposite of what we want to do.

Most of us would rather avoid conflict and be seen as a team player. Schools teach conflict resolution at an early age in an attempt to channel energies into productive uses. Students, however, learn more by the example set by adults than the mantras they learn in school.

Why is it that adults consistently take rides to Abilene? And why do children's mantras

continue to keep us in conformity? No longer do we keep our own compass to steer us on the road less traveled. The great jazz musician Thelonius Monk once said, "The only cool cats are the ones who take chances." He said that sometimes he played notes that he had never heard before. How refreshing to be able to experience or create something new and see it flourish.

It is often said that democracies are successful because they have conflict built into their constitutions. National and community organizations that are successful also have conflict built into their bylaws. It is only the fly by night organizations or dictatorships in various forms who avoid conflict and expect consensus on everything. They are always on the road to Abilene.

We in the Latino community need to learn how to make use of conflict and take chances if we are ever going to hear those new notes that Monk discovers. Taking chances, however, does not mean doing foolish things or taking foolish risks, or biting the hand that feeds you. It does mean being able to face yourself in the mirror and face your family with the values that make up your being. Civility is key in any relationship if it is going to endure. Married couples, friends, colleagues and countries must treat each other with civility or conflict will escalate to combatant behavior.

### In Unity there is strength, communication and progress

It is often said that *envidia* or jealousy is what keeps Latinos from reaching their full potential. It is probably true of every group in society, but Latinos seem to refer to it a lot more. So there may be something to *envidia*. The conflict inside often takes on a negative aspect and is channeled to destructive purposes. Once words are said, it is hard, if not impossible, to take them back. That is one reason why diplomats from the U.S. and the Soviet Union practiced civility and never dropped the bomb on each other.

When Boulder County Image was formed the first time, in the early 1980s, we all had high hopes that the group could work together locally and with the state and regional organizations and with National Image. Boulder chapter members worked on forming the Image state structure in Colorado. Boulder chapter members, the late Don Roybal in particular, helped elect David Montoya as national president and carried the state for him. Things went well for a long time with community workshops and other projects. When the state leadership would no longer provide answers to our questions, the Boulder chapter members stopped paying dues. In 2005, Region VIII director, Joe Davalos, convinced members to affiliate again to help him rebuild Image.

Today the Boulder chapter is at the crossroads again. This time, however, it is with National Image and its leadership. The most frustrating aspect is the lack of communication. The Boulder chapter has yet to receive a charter. We have been told that we should just print one ourselves. Is this an invitation to take a trip to Abilene?

The Spanish philosopher, Miguel de Unamuno, has stated: "If you like someone or if you hate someone, you at least recognize their existence. However, if you ignore someone, you do not recognize their existence.

The Boulder chapter is being ignored by National Image and its officers. The National office now requires an increase in the dues paid to the national office. I believe that the response of the Boulder membership should be to withhold dues to the National office until we at least get the courtesy of being formally presented with a charter that recognizes us as a legitimate chapter. We have a lot to contribute collectively to each other and for those who come to us for assistance on education, employment and civil rights issues. Another trip to Abilene (read the national conference in Reno, Nevada) would be hypocritical given the way our membership has been treated/ignored by the national office and its leadership. Surely our protest would be just and our cause will make us stronger as a group regardless of the banner we choose.

In Unity there is strength, communication and progress

## Publisher's Notes from Colorado, National Image and Around the Country

◆ The Denver Noticiero is a roundup of vacancy information. If you would like to submit vacancy announcements for publication, fax to Becky Rios at 303.497.7283, or e-mail to Becky.Rios@noaa.gov or mail to NOAA/OAR EEO Office, R/OMx3, 325 Broadway, Bldg 22, Boulder, CO 80305. Becky's phone number is 303.497.6439. The Denver Noticiero can be seen online at the OAR EEO web page at: http://eeo.boulder.noaa.gov. Click on Employment. Also, back issues of Imagen can be found by clicking Community Organizations.

\*\*\*\*

- ♦ March 15—DFEB/HEPM meeting at the Denver Federal Center, Building 50, in the Executive Conference Room, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.
- ◆ July 21–24, National Council of La Raza (NCLA) 2007 Annual Conference and Latino Expo USA, to be held at the Miami Beach Conference Center, Miami, FL. For more information, visit web site at www.nclr.org.
- August 13-17, BIG National Training Conference will be in Nashville, TN.

Notes from Ramon Montoya, Special Assistant to the Chairman:

Ramon was recently appointed to the board of directors for the Colorado Coalition for Hispanic Education.

Ramon represented National Image at the Hispanic Annual Salute Dinner. This function honors adult and youth volunteers throughout Colorado. (Ramon is a past board member and served as board president in 1984.)

### MARK THE DATE

April 16–20, 2007

National Image Conference

"Excellence, Direction, Knowledge and Commitment," at the Silver Legacy Hotel, 407 N. Virginia St., Reno, NV.

For more information, visit web site at :www.nationalimageinc.org.

\*\*\*\*

### The Goals and Objectives of Boulder County Image

- A. To seek a broad development and expansion of employment opportunities for the aspirants among the Latino population.
- B. To assist and encourage the government services in providing the best possible circumstances for the recruitment, training, employment and advancement of Latinos.
- C. To encourage and actively support the promotion and advancement of Latinos already employed.
- D. To counter employment issues based on social, ethnic, religious, age and gender discrimination, direct or indirect.
- E. To analyze and determine the educational and professional needs of Latinos seeking entry and advancement in employment; and, whenever possible, provide appropriate training and counseling services to meet these needs particularly among the youth.
- F. To establish and continually upgrade a broad basis of communications with Latino employees across the nation.
- G. To respond to the reasonable requests of non-members and groups whose problems, goals, and objectives are supportable within the By Laws of Boulder County Image.
- H. To enhance the promotion of ethnic pride, culture, and camaraderie through the organized and regular social gatherings which will serve to bind members together.
- I. To provide a non-partisan platform on major issues of local and national significance so that members may be better informed and may express their views.
- J. To expand the concept and objectives of National Image, Inc., to communities throughout the United States to provide maximum impact on the benefits derived from the pursuit of these goals and objectives as stated above.

### **Key Committee Functions**

The key functions performed by Boulder County Image officers and members of standing committees include: **Advocacy on Employment and Education Issues; Membership and Outreach;** and **Consultation**. The President of Boulder County Image will assign members on an ad hoc basis as the need arises. The following is a brief description of each function:

### **Advocacy on Employment and Education Issues**

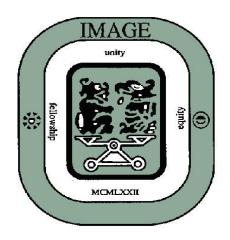
The advocacy function is performed when members take a pro-active role in seeing that a client's issue is addressed by the appropriate community, education or government organization. This function typically involves the following: Mediating an issue at the lowest level before it escalates; Negotiating issues on behalf of clients; Assisting local businesses with employee issues; Assisting students and parents with local school issues, e.g. fighting, drop out, and equal treatment policies; Educating the community on Latino issues; Researching legal information (not advice) on various employment topics; Accompanying clients (employees and applicants) and serving as their representative. Boulder County Image will monitor civil rights issues in the community and provide a community service by organizing Latinos and educating them on issues.

### **Membership and Outreach**

The membership committee is charged with an ongoing program of recruiting and retaining members. This committee coordinates a yearly membership drive for new members. The outreach function is performed by going out into the community to explain Image programs and communicating the assistance that can be provided. Typically, this function involves attending meetings and briefings, networking with agency representatives, providing orientation briefings to newcomers, attending training sessions and education workshops - both as participants and presenters.

### Consultation

Consultation services are typically provided to clients who are in need of explanations related to documents that need an interpretation and require follow up actions. Consultations are private.



### IMAGEN is a publication of

Boulder County Image #348 637-B South Broadway Boulder, CO 80305 Phone 303.497.6439

IMAGEN seeks to inform Latinos on employment, education and civil rights issues.

Editor: Tony Tafoya

#### **MISSION**

National Image, Inc. was established in 1972, to address Latino concerns in employment, education, and civil rights. Boulder County Image is an affiliate of National Image, Inc. and operates in Colorado within Region VIII. Its mission is to work with federal, state, county and local government organizations and community members to improve the status of Latinos in focused mission areas.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS BOULDER COUNTY IMAGE

### **OFFICERS:**

The following were elected as interim officers at the first meeting on July 13, 2005. They will serve while the petition to affiliate with National Image, Inc. is being reviewed.

President - Becky Rios

1st Vice President - Richard Shields

2nd Vice President - Katy Stewart

Secretary - Vacant

Treasurer - Michelle Masias

### TASK FORCE CHAIRS/MEMBERS:

The following have been appointed as chairs of the standing task forces. Members will be contacted to join one of these task forces.

Social/Cultural - Michelle Masias

Education - Richard Shields

Employment - Vacant

Civil Rights - Katy Stewart

#### **NATIONAL OFFICERS:**

National President - John Griego

Region VIII Director - Joseph Davalos

Colorado State Director - Tony Montoya

Special Assistant Office of the Chairman - Ramón Montoya

### Membership Application Form



### Boulder County Image #348 637-B South Broadway Boulder CO 80305

### **Applicant Information (please print or type)**

Name	
Home Address	
City, State, Zip Code	
Employer Name	
Work Address	
City, State, Zip Code	
Telephone (business)	
Telephone (Home)	
Fax	
E-Mail	
Membership Informa	tion #2-07
Type of Membership: N	New Renewal
Signature	Date
(Memhershin dues are	\$32.00 (\$25.00 for National dues \$2.00 for State dues and \$5.00 for Chapter dues )

Boulder County Image #348 637-B South Broadway Boulder, CO 80305